

Arsenal stocks to be X-rayed for agents

ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

An assessment of munitions to determine the presence of explosives and chemical material will begin as early as this week at the Pine Bluff Arsenal, officials announced.

The Chemical Materiel Project will begin assessing the items this week or next. Live projectiles, including 4.2-inch mortars rounds, 75mm rounds and World War II German Traktor rockets, all of which could contain active chemical agents, will be examined.

"Most of these items were recovered at some point and eventually stored here. Some of the items are believed to contain chemical agent, but are not part of the U.S. Army chemical stockpile," said Maj. Kevin Peel, project manager for the Pine Bluff Munitions Assessment System.

The assessment will help the arsenal determine what, if any, chemical agents are in the munitions and how best to destroy them, he said in a press release.

The materials will be X-rayed to determine their contents. Gamma rays will be used to identify chemicals that may be inside the munitions, such as blister agents like mustard gas.

"The ability to determine what's inside a potential chemical warfare item without opening it is beneficial to the environment and to the safety of the people involved," Peel said.

The assessment is expected to last through next summer.

The headquarters of Non-Stockpile Chemical Materiel Project in Edgewood, Md., will use a mobile Explosive Destruction System to destroy the items.